

Violent turn to Marathwada stir

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AURANGABAD, Dec. 6: The agitation for the re-naming of Marathwada University erupted into violence today with twenty persons among the pro-changers sustaining injuries in a brush with the police at Kranti Chowk and a bus being set on fire near the Harsul Jail.

Trouble spurted at Kranti Chowk when the Namantarwadi Samiti mostly leftists and socialist courting arrest after staging a massive demonstration at the Chowk, demanded that they be transported to jail in State Transport buses instead of trucks.

An over-enthusiastic police officer whipped out a revolver to browbeat the satyagrahis into submission and his attempt failed as the rective crowd started pelting stones. Police resorted to lathi charge and lob-

bed tear gas shells to control the situation, and in the melee 20 persons got injured.

When the satyagrahis were taken and dumped in an open compound off the Harsul Jail, they managed to wreak their anger on the buses during the journey, and broken glass panes and tattered cushions littered the roads all the way from Kranti Chowk to the jail.

It was a virtual stand-off between the pro-changers and anti-changers in the city as the latter were cowed down by the massive turnout orchestrated by Dalits and non-Dalit in favour of the renaming.

The political see-saw teetered to one side and the expected confrontation did not materialise as the anti-changers kept themselves indoors in the wake of the massive onrush of humanity in demonstrations staged in different parts of the city.

Over 10,000 Dalits and other sympathisers in favour of renaming the University courted arrest during the day for the violation of prohibitory orders enforced in the city. Barring a

few incidents of violence the satyagraha was peaceful on the whole.

Meanwhile the Marathwada Bandh call given by the anti-changers proved to be partly successful not because they commanded support but shop-keepers apprehending trouble, downed their shutters.

The satyagrahis broke into two groups, one led by Dalit Panthers and the others by leftists and Socialists. The Dalit morcha was led by Mrs Maicaheb Ambedkar, widow of the late Babasaheb Ambedkar, and Mr Arun Kamble, President of the Dalit Panthers.

The Dalit morchas came in the form of tributaries and converged near the Ambedkar statue near Bhadkal gate. They wanted to garland the statue and the police allowed 24 people, including Mrs Ambedkar, Mr Arun Kamble and Mr Gangadhar Gade, Secretary of the Dalit Panthers, to go ahead with the garlanding.

Later, Mrs Ambedkar, Mr Kamble and Mrs Gade courted arrest and in all 40 State Trans-

port buses were pressed into service to take 3,000 men and women satyagrahis from Bhadkal gate to the jail.

Though the massive demonstration by the Dalits and non-Dalits progressive sympathisers threw the entire Government machinery out of gear, the police foiled their bid to put up a nameplate, "Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada Vidyapeeth" at the University gate.

About 300 Dalits were arrested as they staged a noisy and militant protest in front of the gate. They insisted on marching ahead but were refrained from doing so by their leaders and the police.

The subdued anti-changers were satisfied at having gained a partial success in organising the Marathwada Bandh and the massive show of strength by the changers put them on the defensive and they remained indoors.

The young and old, and women with babies in their arms raised militant slogans saying

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that they would get the University renamed. They also raised slogan: denouncing Chief Minister Sharad Pawar.

The arrested satyagrahis had not only to face the police but also the onslaught of the scorching rays of the sun and had to remain without food and water for the whole day as no arrangements were made to look after them.

As passions flamed and crowds jostled in the morchas, the magistrates at the jail spent their time idly. The satyagrahis were produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Mr Y R Kulkarni.

According to Mr Kulkarni, about 600 people have been remanded to custody and 650 sent to Nasik and Yervada jails.

Mr Arun Kamble came out of custody later and told newsmen that about 48,000 satyagrahis had courted arrest including 15,000 women. He alleged that police lathi-charged satyagrahis even while they were in custody.